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THE ISLE OF WHIMS

CAROL HOYT POWERS



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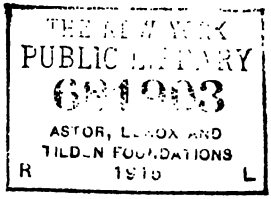
CAROL HOYT POWERS



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The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

This book is
Lovingly Dedicated
to
My Mother.
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THE ISLE OF WHIMS

CHAPTER I

AT last we were to have a summer home! The long expected moment had arrived. What fun it would be to choose it! What fun it was even to talk it over! Should we build it or buy it? That was the question. I felt like Hamlet in those days only my problem was such a happy one:—"To build or to buy?"

Where should it be? To what community should we belong during the long, lazy summer months when He was at leisure? We were free to go some distance from home; in fact we could go almost anywhere, provided we could afford it.

What should be our first step toward deciding these momentous questions? With

frowning brow and with an expression almost intelligent, I asked the question.

He said, "We must go and see what places there are!"

To be sure, "Go and see!" There is something wonderful about the masculine intellect. I somehow never get quite used to it.

So we went and saw. We took long trips all over and around. When I started out on each trip I was filled with an almost infantile enthusiasm. I saw a summer home in my mind's eye, a complete and beautiful thing, a place of harmony and joy, noble parks, a few deer, a rambling stone house, beautiful lawns sloping to the sea. The sea was imperative—I might give up the deer—but the sea must stay.

Why didn't we realize that the amount we had on hand wouldn't buy an ancestral estate with parks and deer? Because we were creatures of temperament. Because all

joy would have departed from our lives, if we had sanely and wisely thought out the price of land per foot, the number of feet we could buy, the size and kind of cottage we could afford to build. No,—we were to have a summer home. It was sufficient.

We saw beautiful places with noble drives and sloping lawns and we were told that they were owned by the rich of the earth "who toil not neither do they spin," but when we understood that they were not for us, we were never a bit disappointed.

I can't tell you why. Perhaps it was because we could dream of lovelier places than we ever saw, and we were always happy to start out again after our dream.

I remember I had heard of a beautiful section of country where large estates abounded, and I persuaded Him to go to see it. First we took a long railroad journey and then we found a real-estate man and drove through beautiful roads.

"At last," thought I, "we have found our place." A feeling of peace and absolute content filled my heart. We passed estate after estate where the houses were only dimly seen from the road, and estate after estate where the only house we could see at all was the picturesque little lodge. I could feel my very heart expand, and I knew my expression grew benevolent. This was where I should have been born. I recognized my fitness for the place.

Finally we came to what might be called the slums of the town and there, away from the sea and with no glimpse of its beauty, was a house which I mistook for a hen-house. This was our portion in that community!

The scorn with which we both refused to leave the carriage, and the joy with which we shook the dust of the place from our feet, remain with me yet.

The place was not for us. So much the worse for the place.

I can't tell how we arrived at the conclusion, but we felt that somehow that particular place had been weighed in the balances and been found wanting, and the next morning with just as much enthusiasm as ever, we started on another tour of investigation and this time although our portion was still a hen-house it was nearer the sea. We were progressing.

Finally after we had visited all the celebrated resorts within four or five hours of our home, and after we had spent much good money in railroad fares, some one told us of a pretty little island three hours from town where the green shore sloped to the water and where trees grew so plentifully that even charming people like ourselves, unhampered by millions, might enjoy them. Here we made our summer home.

A tiny drive bordered by hedges, a green lawn sloping to the water and a pretty weather-stained cottage fitted for every

need; this was our home, and such is the joy of the dramatic temperament that it was exactly what I had always dreamed it would be. To be sure the details were a bit different, but after all, what are details? We were looking for beauty and comfort and beauty and comfort were ours.

The summer home was no longer a dream but a blessed reality.

Chapter II

THEN one beautiful, beautiful morning when the sun danced on the water, making us both feel a little intoxicated, we decided to have a boat. Yes, we decided to have a boat and a skipper.

Now that decision may seem simple to you, because you may have been brought up on boats,—yachts may have been your portion from the cradle,—but to us a boat had heretofore been only a dream, a fond dream indeed, but one little likely to be realized in this incarnation; and yet here we were with the wind blowing in our nostrils, deciding that that dream should no longer escape us, but should become a present reality.

So we hired a boat and a skipper. Oh no,

we didn't buy it and perhaps it isn't necessary for me to say that it wasn't a steam yacht, but lest there be those who might get a wrong impression, I emphasize the fact that it was not.

No, it was an old-fashioned sloop with little to recommend it but its roomy cabin. Now that I know more of the contour of boats, it is inconceivable to me that I could have felt so proud of that old tub, but proud I was. He sometimes pointed out to me little sloops which I realize now were racy little craft,—quite as unlike our boat, as a woman with a straight-front corset is unlike her bulging sister, but I was so ignorant at the time that I actually preferred our bulges.

The cabin was my joy. By hanging a sheet through the center we could make two apartments. Each transom could be extended till it became a double berth and four people could sleep in that cabin with decency and more or less comfort. We could actually cruise on the boat.

We were like children. I did not know there could be anything better in the sloop line, and He, although he knew, did not care. Every pleasant day during that first summer we sailed in that boat. We couldn't afford not to sail. We were paying for the boat, we were paying for the skipper and we could not conceive of leaving either of them unoccupied. I think I never worked quite so hard to get my money's worth. What mattered it that our boy was only a year old? He sailed just the same. We had morning sails, we had picnics, we had afternoon sails, and sometimes we had evening sails. Finally, we planned a cruise. We were to sail across the sound and anchor in a little harbor we had heard of, stay over night and come back the next day. That meant luncheon, dinner, and breakfast to provide for.

Many, many times we loaded our little tender with things which seemed actually

necessary to carry on that trip. I feel quite sure that many families have gone abroad with less preparation than we made for our short cruise.

Being dramatically inclined and liking always to dress the part, I had provided myself with what I called my "boating costume." The details of that costume I cannot now remember, but rubber-soled shoes and white duck were it's chief characteristics.

Why then, should I have started on a cruise in a dark blue gingham, high heeled slippers and rubbers? The rubbers are easily explained:—He insisted on the rubbers after He saw the slippers. Why the slippers and why the gingham? The intricacies of a woman's mind are incomprehensible even to the woman herself. He thought I was naturally so unyachtsmanlike, that I actually wanted the boat to look as unlike what a boat should look, as possi-

ble. I do not attempt to explain or justify my costume, I merely state what it was.

We started away on one of those foggy, misty mornings when the world seems a deadly place to live in and a boat the deadliest. However, we started.

We were four:—my sister and her husband and my husband and I—not counting the skipper who slept forward.

The time passed pleasantly, indeed. We spent most of it in eating. Why is it that one wishes to eat all the time on board a boat? I can't tell why, but personally any other use of the time always seems a waste to me. He did the cooking. I made the coffee.

Late in the afternoon we came in to the little harbor as we had planned to do and anchored. It was on the shore of an island. What a lonely place it was! The fog made it seem even a little mysterious. One family lived there all alone. As I watched

their home I wondered how they lived. I even wondered if they didn't sometimes get deadly sick of each other,—if they wouldn't be glad to see new faces.

Even as the thought went through my mind, a lad some fourteen years old, came down to the shore. He called to us pleasantly and our men took the tender and went over and brought him on board where he stayed for an hour or more.

As we talked, he doubtless heard my brother called Doctor although this we didn't know at the time or I am afraid we should have called him something else. After we had eaten our supper (and I remember we fried potatoes and broiled steak), we sat and talked until very late, and then we proceeded to try to sleep. My use of the word "try" is intentional. Our cabin seemed suddenly to have shrunk. However we composed ourselves to rest. Possibly we might have rested in some sort of fashion had not our

dear brother rested too well. The intimate companionship of a small boat reveals many things. We had never known he snored. And even now after the lapse of seven years, snoring seems a wrong term to describe the sounds that issued from the other side of the sheet. The word is inadequate.

When this tumult was at it's height, we heard a voice calling to us out of the fog and the gloom. We were up in an instant. The voice must have come from the shore. We listened intently, every nerve strained. Then the call was repeated:—"Is there a doctor on board?" I can never express how terrifying this call sounded.

However it stopped the tumult. Although it had seemed the minute before, that nothing short of an earthquake would rouse our dear brother and stop his noise, yet the first call for the doctor brought him to his feet. Then the voice came again:—"There's a woman dyin'—ain't one of you men a doc-

tor?" It didn't occur to our brother to deny the charge. He was ready in an instant. The night was black. We could hardly see the tender as the skipper brought it alongside. Almost immediately it was blotted from view as it moved toward the shore. We knew where it was, only as the regular beat of the oars came to us out of the blackness. The deck was as wet as if it had rained. The place was lonely beyond words. We sat and waited. In less than half an hour, the doctor came back. "She's dead," he said. I looked at him in surprise. I knew he was a successful physician, but I didn't know he could kill them so quickly. "That was quick work!" I gasped in admiring accents. "What was the matter with her?" "A drunken spasm;—dead before I got there." Almost before the words were out of his mouth, he had retired to his apartment and again the same terrific tumult smote the air.

My thoughts went out to the poor woman who had just died, and I forgot the doctor.

"Poor soul!" I thought, "Who wouldn't get drunk if one lived here in this loneliness and gloom!" Then I began to wonder about her. I could see her in my mind's eye. Poor woman! She was doubtless a creature of temperament like ourselves. She was lonely, depressed: the fog came, no other way occurred to her to dispel it and so she got drunk. I could understand it so well. My heart went out to her in tenderest sympathy. So might I have done, if I had lived in that dreary place year after year. The more I thought of it, the more I became convinced that so *should* I have done had my life been cast in the dreariness and solitariness of that spot,—but my life, thank God, had variety. My imagination had always had an outlet. I could always run down town and find a bargain when a spell of temperament came on. I could change

a chamber into a den, making the room absolutely unrecognizable in a day. I could buy a new hat and charge it, I had numberless resources that kept me from feeling the necessity of getting drunk, but she, poor soul, could do nothing. Doubtless if she had ever expressed the desire to change a perfectly good wall paper just because she was so sick of it she couldn't stand it, her family would have thought her crazy. She had no outlet for her imagination, and it killed her. You may call it a drunken fit if you like,—the name is a detail. In reality her imagination was cramped and so she died. I said a little prayer for her in my heart, and I sent a whisper to her over the water, that, altho the others might think she died of drink, I *knew* and understood. And then somehow in spite of the fog, in spite of the weirdness and in spite of the gloom, I felt a tender warmth in my heart and I went to sleep.

The next morning we started for home. The sun came out and we finished our cruise in a burst of glory.

That was my only cruise. The men went and stayed a week and came back looking like savages, but we did not go again.

Toward the end of the summer, I began to suspect that our boat was not all a yachtsman might desire. I began to notice outline, and finally, I could recognize even a good-fitting set of sails.

One day I said: "Let's have a boat built for us this winter."

I thought I made that remark with my own intelligence, but I realize now that I simply expressed what was in the air. He grinned and said sheepishly "Let's." I suppose he hated to say that he had already decided to do that very thing.

And so we built Peggy!

She was forty feet over all, twenty-five on the water-line and shapely. Her contour

was perfect,—no bulging cabin, but a racy craft.

We reached our little island that next summer before Peggy did, and day after day we sat on our little piazza with the spy-glasses glued to our eyes and watched for Peggy to come into the harbor, but day after day passed and Peggy did not come. One rainy night after we had gone to bed a loud knock was heard at our front door and He went down to see who disturbed our slumbers. Two men in dripping oil skins informed him that Peggy had arrived, and the next morning when we looked out of the window, with the sunshine making her white sides dazzling to our eyes, there she was, a beautiful thing, dancing and coquetting with the waves, like a pretty woman conscious of her own beauty and charm! Truly we loved her.

There was nothing in the way of curtains and cushions that we did not make for her,

and everything was marked with her own dear name. She had her own silver and her own dishes. These we were never allowed to use at home.

Once a sheet belonging to her was discovered by Him on a bed in the house. I told Him it was an accident. I assured Him it shouldn't happen again, but after that He never trusted me. Those things He couldn't keep on board, He stored away in our attic in a secret place. When we started out on a picnic, He would suddenly appear with His cooking utensils, His big blue coffee pot and all the necessary articles, for a day on the boat. But when we came home those things disappeared and we never saw them again until the next picnic.

Those were happy, happy days! Sorry I am to chronicle the fact that before that second summer was over, I had ceased to enjoy sailing.

I love to sit in my window and watch

Peggy sail out of the harbor. I like even better to see her sail in at night, but to think of sailing, eating or sleeping on any boat smaller than a steam yacht has no longer any charm for me. I had tried too hard that first summer to get my money's worth and this was my punishment.

The boy sails with Him now. I watched them sail away this morning. I shall, please God, watch them sail home tonight.

But the glory of sailing is a trifle dimmed to us all,—our skipper often goes blue-berrying now. He has much more leisure, but I truly think he, as well as we, had our happiest times when we took the baby and sailed all day long in his old sloop.

Chapter III.

WE talked so much about our island when we went home after our first summer and were so enthusiastic about an old-fashioned place next to ours, that some dear friends, who liked the things we liked, knew that they wanted that very place. The island people were too canny to rent it. If anyone wanted it, buying was the only way to secure it.

So one cold winter day this friend and I made a journey to the island. It looked like snow when we left home, but we felt sure it couldn't snow on the day we chose to visit our island,—but it did! During our journey on the steamer we stayed in the cabin shut away from the storm, but when we reached our destination a howling blizzard was in

progress. Snow and sleet and tremendous wind greeted us.

We stayed at the little hotel in the village and were as comfortable as possible and in the afternoon we went up to "The Neck," where our little house and the old-fashioned place were both situated. We made our journey in what looked to be a big wooden box on wheels. It was stuffy enough to make one sea-sick, but it all seemed part of the fun. There were windows, I remember, in this box, but we could see nothing. The wind howled and shrieked and the air was thick with snow.

When we reached the dear old-fashioned place, we drove into the yard and when the real-estate man unboxed us, we made a dash for the door.

The beautiful lawn sloped to the harbor,—at least it had so sloped last summer, but now only blackness met our eyes. Our little place was on the left. We assured our friend

it was there and we begged her to believe that the harbor had not moved. It was there though she couldn't see it. We dashed across in the sleet and snow to prove that our house was still standing. But all these assurances and dashings were unnecessary. The old-fashioned place was sold with just as much ease as if the sun had been shining. Because we were people with a dramatic sense, the very coldness and discomfort of the house made us able to picture its coolness and charm in the summer; the wildness of the storm seemed to foretell the sweetness of the harbor breezes. The dear old-fashioned house itself was full of wonderful possibilities, and we both could see it with every possibility realized.

There was a large room or hall in it, which had once been used as a Sailor's Bethel and before the next summer came round, this hall was a charming living room, just as we had imagined it as we saw it that day in the

storm. A floor was laid for dancing, a big fire-place built in the corner and our good times began.

From now on we broke into society,—in fact I might almost say, we became society leaders. We still went sailing and bathing but in every other way we lived quite as we did at home. We began to give real dinner parties, moonlight suppers, and on all possible occasions we wore our low-necked frocks and we sometimes went to town to buy new ones.

Now all this was very deplorable,—at least our men thought so, but the feminine portion of our little community liked it. We liked dressing up, we liked having people down for week-ends, we even liked our dances notwithstanding the fact that dancing with the husbands of your intimate friends is not stimulating to your mental processes.

Doubtless you have all noticed this but if you are a philosopher you will have found out the reason why.

When you are as familiar with all the peculiarities of an individual, as you usually are with those of the husbands of your friends, there are no worlds to discover.

Wives should be muzzled. They should not reveal the personal peculiarities of their husbands, but they do. The consequence is that you become so intimately acquainted with a man through the guileless conversation of his wife, that he seems absolutely commonplace to your imagination, and conversation with him languishes and any enjoyment of his society disappears.

You know, for instance, that he hates dancing; now somehow that takes the charm out of the dreamiest waltz with him. You know that if the air blows on the back of his neck that he takes a violent cold; this rather spoils a pleasant conversation by a cool window.

In short, when you know the weight of a man's underwear, and just the day he puts

on his thick ones, whether he wears pajamas or night-shirts and that he is moved to tears if his steak is too well-done, you may be his friend in time of sickness or need, but you can't find him dangerously interesting.

So I state it to our credit, that we enjoyed those dances,—not wildly but with a certain calm and peaceful pleasure,—only wondering sometimes in a vague way, why we used to think dancing an especially interesting amusement.

All this is to explain why we found a certain group of people, who later in the season came to our Saturday Evening parties, very, very attractive.

They were New York people who were staying at a hotel some little distance from our colony. We knew them in the superficial way one knows people in the summer. The men were pleasing and more than that they possessed for us the charm of mystery.

Just imagine after three or four years of

married life and of dancing and talking with men who danced and talked with you only for their wives' sakes; after feeling that your whole endeavor must be to bore your partner as little as possible; to make his arduous duty as little arduous as you could; after three or four years of all this, imagine what it was to be suddenly surrounded with a group of men, well-bred men of the world, immaculately dressed, who actually seemed interested in you as an individual.

I remember there was one who seemed to enjoy dancing with me, and I must confess that after the first shock of surprise, that I enjoyed dancing with him. I will not deny it. I found it most interesting.

He was good-looking, well-bred and best of all, he was surrounded with mystery. He didn't look as if he would cry if the steak were too well-done but the joy of it was that I didn't know. I didn't know anything about him, and he seemed to feel a similar mystery

in me because he never seemed bored at all and he sometimes came to talk to me when certainly politeness didn't demand it. He must actually have liked it! I felt like a girl again. I had never before realized how hopelessly married I was. It was nice to feel that, though married, one could still be a human being.

I had positively ceased to express any real thoughts I ever had to anyone but to Him and the boy, and now I suddenly found myself talking about awfully interesting things. Years ago, I used to talk about real things to many men, but my conversation during my early married life had been chiefly upon such safe topics as might not bore the men I knew, who were other peoples' husbands and mustn't be troubled.

The evening passed with unusual swiftness. As I waltzed down the hall I looked over at my husband and smiled, thinking how pleased he would be that I was having

such a pleasant evening. He didn't smile at all.

I thought he couldn't have seen me, but I was a little puzzled. I can hardly remember ever meeting his eye without seeing him smile. I began to feel a little unhappy without knowing why.

The next distinct impression I had was of the nervous activity of our host. He seemed to be looking for something. He was a good looking chap but now his brow was black and he looked angry. I looked to see if his wife were anywhere about; but she wasn't. It couldn't be she who had made him angry, for she wasn't in the hall at all. Doubtless she had gone out on the lawn, for the moon was shining and it was a glorious evening. Then I saw our host go out on the lawn and come back presently with his wife and a very charming young man. I had met the young man earlier in the evening, and the thought had passed through my mind that he

would prove very interesting indeed, but I hadn't seemed to have the leisure to see more of him. My hostess doubtless had. She was a very dignified woman, but she looked almost gay as she came into the room. She presented such a contrast to my brother-in-law who was sitting near the door, that I could not fail to notice it. Why did our husbands look so cross? My joy suddenly evaporated, the evening became flat, stale and unprofitable, and I was glad when it was over.

When we walked home across the lawn, He didn't speak to me. Thinking to make a little pleasant conversation, I said,—"Who was that attractive woman you danced with so many times?" I can see now the lack of wisdom in the question. It was positively courting danger. It was absolutely a mistake. Not only was the question an unfortunate one, but the attempt at any conversation was worse than foolish.

The things he said I could not repeat. They were really too cruel! As I recall his conversation now, (the conversation I so unwisely started) there was little he didn't say.

He said things he knew would hurt my feelings. There wasn't a thing about the whole evening that had pleased him. He didn't like one of those nice men. He didn't care for their clothes, he didn't like their manners and when I spoke of their charming mystery—any woman ought to have known better than mention that—I would be ashamed to repeat what he said; actually ashamed!

I saw my little dream, wherein I became again a human being, vanish into smoke.

No,— if you're married you must just be married. You must dance only with the stupid husbands of your dear friends, you must protect them from draughts and you must never imagine that you can talk and

laugh again as if you were a girl; because you can't!

I was miserable and subdued and all I wanted was to be forgiven and to tread again the straight and narrow way. When you are married it is seriously unpleasant when one of you is unhappy.

After we had made up, I realized and frankly said:—"Though I dance with none but stupid husbands all my life; even though I never dance again, to be married and happy is enough. It is as near perfection as this old world allows. A happy marriage and men friends too is too much to ask". I never asked it more.

I knew He would never mention the matter again. He is not the nagging kind, but I was desperately afraid that some of our friends might have noticed His dullness and lack of enthusiasm on that particular Saturday night, but my fears were groundless.

A slight air of depression pervaded our

entire colony the following Sunday morning. Little mention was made of the previous evening, no mention was made of the attractive men. We were all a little dull and stupid.

Long afterwards I discovered that my experience was not unique.

My dear sister and our charming hostess had both been interviewed by their husbands, and they stated to me in confidence that they neither of them had known or even suspected how much forcible language their husbands had at their command.

Our short flight had ended very quickly. We were humble and subdued wives once more; warranted to stand without hitching, —but just the same that was a very pleasant evening.

Chapter IV.

"SATAN always finds some mischief for idle hands to do" is a familiar saying, but one that had heretofore occupied little thought of mine, for I had led an extremely busy life, but now that the social bee was buzzing in our bonnets, we, the feminine portion of our community, sought constant diversion. We were not socially ambitious on our island, we were only socially busy.

Like children who say, "What shall we play next?" we said one to another. "What shall we do now?"

A wonderful inspiration came to one of us. We would have a barn dance. Could anything be grander! I am very much afraid I made the next suggestion,—"Let it be a costume party." A costume party it was.

Now when a group of virtuous, fairly intelligent, married women, with families and husbands to care for, find themselves so out of employment that they need the diversion of a costume party in a barn five miles away, it is a sad condition of affairs, but I am stating these things as they happened, not as they should have happened.

The next few days flew by on the wings of the wind. Our costumes were made between times, between the necessary marketing, the entertaining and the accepting of entertainment and all the daily routine that filled our lives.

My instinct was to plan a very elaborate costume and, upon finding it a little difficult of fulfilment, to be contented with anything. Our resources were few. The first day we sat around and told each other of lovely bits we had at home which we could make into gorgeous creations if we only had them with us. Finding however, that these lovely bits

didn't pack themselves and come to the island, as our longing thoughts reached them, we began to look about us to see what we could find.

In one of the village stores I found some pale blue muslin covered with pink roses, and out of this I made a sort of peasant costume and called myself "A Flower Girl." With a basket of flowers upon my arm, I was complete. My sister borrowed a Swedish costume of one of the maids, and our neighbor in the old-fashioned house, chancing in an idle hour upon a rake, decided to go as Maud Muller.

It would ill become me to say how charming we looked in our costumes, but perhaps it would not be vain to tell you that there were those who were deeply moved when they saw us. My neighbor's husband was the most dramatic man in our group and when he first saw his wife arrayed as Maud Muller, he was heard to gasp,—"My God!"

and yet he didn't seem to be in prayer, but undoubtedly he felt a sudden need of some outside power to sustain him. But when you come to think of it, there is really no reason in the world why Maud Muller shouldn't weigh two hundred pounds. Perhaps if she had so weighed, the judge would never have got away. To be sure, popular prejudice has conceived her as a slip of a girl, but who cares for popular prejudice! Our Maud tipped the scales at a good two hundred. She was a big, lovely, husky creature, who would have made her raking of some account and would never have allowed anything so good as the judge to get by.

At the last moment, I heard of a beautiful crook possessed by one of our neighbors, and with fickle joy, I dropped my flower basket, took the crook and became "Little Bo-Peep," with distinct emphasis on the first word. However, I was quite as much like "Little Bo-Peep" as I was like a "Flow-

er Girl." I can swear to that. I do not pretend to say that I was designed by an all-wise Providence to play the part of Bo-Peep, but I do maintain that Bo-Peep was quite as appropriate for me as was the Flower Girl, and as Little Bo-Peep I went to the barn dance.

This barn, five miles away, had been chosen to make the whole evening a little more difficult.

At the time of this dance, few people on the island had automobiles, and those with horses preferred to trust to the wide-geared carriages belonging in the village, so we of our colony went to the party in a big four seated wagon used sometimes as a stage. Every step was fraught with danger. The road was dark, and the ruts were deep. It seemed many, many times as if the big wagon were going over, but just as an upheaval seemed inevitable, the wagon would suddenly right itself and come up smiling.

"I would be willing to die" thought I to myself, "but the cause seems hardly worth while. After all a barn dance is not a great occasion and I would hate to be found by a wrecking party as "Little Bo-Peep." Nothing happened to us however, and we arrived safely at the barn.

We could hear the band playing a waltz as we drove up, and the full charm of the occasion burst upon us as we entered.

The barn was festive to a degree. Flags and bunting covered the walls and a brilliant group occupied the floor. Gypsies, Snow Queens and Goddesses of Liberty were dancing together in the most careless fashion and I longed to join the throng. I presently pranced away in the arms of a Bandit and the fun proceeded.

Now there really is no reason in the world why a bandit shouldn't be short and blond and gentle. There is no reason why his cheeks shouldn't be red and his hair curly,

but popular prejudice had so filled my mind with another type of bandit, that save for the revolvers and other significant features of his toilet, I should never have suspected the dangerous character of my partner.

A gentle gipsy next caught my attention. He was trying very hard to look inscrutable, —as if he had unsuspected depths in his nature, but his guilelessness was too evident.

As the evening wore on, and I watched this brilliant pageant with curious, inquisitive eyes, it began to dawn on me that nearly every one in the room, had chosen a costume to suit what he liked to consider himself, instead of what he really was. When this thought had taken full possession of my mind and I realized that I might be on the verge of a psychological discovery, dancing lost all charm for me. Nothing is ever quite so much fun as the "why" of things, so I hid in a quiet corner behind some flowers to watch and to wonder.

There were grave and serious women, or so I had always considered them, who for this one evening wore costumes of the utmost frivolity which gave them an opportunity to exercise a friskiness of temperament, that I feel sure they wouldn't have owned to possessing. There were little insignificant women dressed as Goddesses of Liberty, and enjoying themselves. A foolish youth was dressed as a judge,and a very gay one as a priest.

And then I turned my eyes upon myself. Why was I dressed as "Little Bo-Peep?" Was it because I had always unconsciously envied little women who prance and flutter and who stand for everything in the world I do not stand for? Was this the whole truth in a nut-shell? Were we all so sick of ourselves and of the emotions we were familiar with that we idealized all things that were the exact opposite of our own characteristics? Were we all like discon-

tented buttercups who long to be daisies? I wondered. The poor little scene began to seem pathetic to me as I watched its brilliancy and tried to understand its revelations.

And then suddenly, I seemed to possess seeing eyes and an understanding heart, and it was revealed to me that it wasn't discontent, as we generally understand the word, that made goddesses desire to become butterflies, and gentle youths bandits, and that made us all desire to play we were something quite unlike ourselves,—no, it was something much better.

It was rather an honest wish to get away for a few hours from our own personalities,—from our faults and weaknesses,—and to become free for a little, of things we recognize in ourselves and despise. It was this distaste for our own faults that made us idealize anything that was unlike them, and to picture as admirable faults unlike but quite as real as our own. Did we not indeed

imagine we were getting into a sort of freedom, simply because we were being a little different from our everyday selves?

I found myself feeling a little depressed by my deductions. Why didn't the glimpse we all have of our failings and the vision of something better that had doubtless come to everyone in this room, lead us up and out into a wide country where we could drop the things we deplore, which are the unreal part of us, and where we could live in the real?

Why, when this vision, though dimly seen, had once come to us, did we so misinterpret it? Should we always be like foolish children, trying to get out of one difficulty and stepping into another? Should we go on playing and playing until we were too old and tired to play any more.

But just as I was feeling a little tearful, He found me behind the flowers and told me it was time to go home, and He looked

so good to me in his conventional evening clothes (of course none of our men went in costume) that I squeezed his hand and actually rose to go home the first time he suggested it.

Our ride home was pleasant. The moon had risen and the dangers of travel were consequently lessened. I sat close to Him and I sat very still. I was thinking. Before we drove down our little drive I had come to two conclusions. The first was:—"A woman should be thankful every day and every hour of her life for a husband who never does silly things" and the second conclusion was this:—"One foolish thing I have done this night I shall never do again; I shall never again go in costume to a costume party."

Chapter V

IT is amazing when one comes to think of it, that two people of different temperaments, of different tastes, of different upbringing, to say nothing of different ideals and principles, can marry and live together in close companionship and be happy; and yet we see this happiness all about us. We see happy homes; we see real unselfishness in these homes and what perhaps is best of all, a spirit of tolerance.

This happy result seems to prove that love rubs off the edges of dispositions. Love is the great reagent which blends two seemingly opposing forces into a unit. This blending is the foundation-process in the creation of a home.

There are, however, some tragedies in tea-cups before the blending process is com-

pleted. These experiences are pleasant to recall, when there is no bitterness in the memory. They serve to remind one of happy, happy days—days never to be forgotten,—days that in spite of the tragedies were full of tender poetry.

He and I were very congenial. Besides being lovers we were very good friends. We enjoyed the same pleasures. We both loved the theatre, we both hated cards. Neither of us was musical. We both liked good books and we liked to discuss them.

I liked His looks. I liked His clothes. I liked His taste generally. He liked my clothes. Hats were the one thing we came to grief over.

It was always a relief to me when He had seen me wear a new hat for the first time.

I am not naturally secretive, but I always have a hat-box sent to my own room. Then I wait until I know He is away from home, then I lock my door and proceed to untie

the string. Of course I can't untie it and when I look for my scissors it takes some minutes to find them. Then I take out some of the tissue paper and finally I have my hat in my hand.

Then, with as much secrecy as if I were committing a crime, I try it on. Of course it is never as becoming as it was in the shop but I gulp down my disappointment, take out all the tissue paper in the box, place my hat inside again, tuck the snowy wads around it, put the cover on the box, shut the closet door and unlock my room.

And after this, although the hat is covered and tied up, and I know that no one will go to my closet, yet until I wear that hat for the first time and he pronounces judgment upon it, I feel that I have a guilty secret, a skeleton in the closet in very truth.

As I grow older and have been married more years, I find that there is a certain joy in this secrecy. I sometimes have two

or three skeletons that await his approval. It still makes me unhappy if he doesn't like them, but all joy in life does not now depart from me as it did in those early days. Then the sun ceased to shine, and the whole universe became cold and gray.

Sometimes He would be quite pleased with a hat and as I came into his presence with the hat on my head He would say:—

"That's a pretty hat. Let me fix it on straight for you," and here He would move it so vigorously that my hairpins would come out.

"But dear," I would answer, "the way I had it on was right."

"Oh no, it couldn't have been. You see it was crooked," and he would smile reassuringly at me.

"It was meant to be crooked. That was what made it expensive. I don't want a straight hat."

"Now dear, I wouldn't let a little thing

like that upset me. I merely put the hat where it belonged."

"See darling, I had a white thread put in the front of that hat so I couldn't make a mistake," and here I would proudly show him that I was right and he would stop talking, silenced but not convinced and ever after when I went any where with him with that particular hat upon my head, I would see his eye wander to my headgear, and then he would lean forward and say confidentially.

"That's a pretty hat. Put it a little more this way."

Nothing in the hat line really pleased Him unless it were picturesque. A broad brim and a sweeping feather symbolized to Him both beauty and elegance. Really smart hats that looked simply fit and proper but not picturesque He considered beneath His notice. He never objected to them, considering them doubtless a necessity for

everyday wear, but entirely beneath the criticism of an authority like Himself. Naturally, as the years have gone on, I have learned to revel in this particular kind of hat. It looks modest to Him and inexpensive. A man's innocence is almost touching, but sometimes it seems as if it were part of an all-wise plan that a man should be unsophisticated. It saves so much friction.

But there was a type of hat that aroused his ire. Once when no one was wearing picturesque hats I bought one of this type. I had no idea he would be violent about it. I wasn't crazy about it myself. It had a combination of cerise velvet and violets that would have been startling if it hadn't been put together by an artist. As it was, I thought it rather smart.

I remember we were going to a reception on a certain afternoon. I went into the living room where he was reading. I was putting on my gloves and trying to look

unconscious. It seemed as if He never would look up. Finally I said meekly,—

"How do you like my hat?" He looked at me then, and a most disagreeable expression came over his face.

"Do you intend to wear that hat?"

"Why not? Don't you like it?" I asked.

"Like it! Do you mean to say you picked out that hat yourself?"

"Why yes, what is the matter with it?"

"You'd better put on another hat so we can start."

I obeyed meekly and we went to the reception in silence. No word was spoken again about the hat until evening, when I said:

"You didn't like anything about my new hat, did you?"

"Like it, I should say not!"

"Well dear, you needn't be so cross about it. I am the one who should be cross."

"You?"

"Yes,—I am disappointed in my hat and disappointed in my husband."

"Don't talk of disappointments!" he said gloomily.

"What have you had to disappoint you?" I asked scornfully.

He fixed me with a cold and unfeeling eye and said tragically, "My wife!"

"The woman I thought you were," he continued, "would never have worn that hat."

"Well, I didn't, did I?" I said frivolously. But his gloom would not be banished. He stared at me as if perhaps he were seeing me for the first time, then he said sadly:—

"If you are different in one thing, how do I know but what you may be different in all things?"

"Just think of it! You may have been loving the wrong woman all the time," but I couldn't make him laugh.

"How could I help what your thoughts of me were?" I said at last indignantly, "Did I ever tell you I had infallible taste?"

"No, of course not."

"Well then, I should think you'd be ashamed! I have loved you just the same in spite of the fact that I didn't like your last year's overcoat at all. You looked like a horse jockey in it, but I never went back on you. When I married you I expected to put up with a few things, and I have. It just shows you never really loved me. Why, I should love you no matter what you wore." Here I began to cry. From this time on the situation was mine. He was on his knees figuratively and literally. He apologized for making me shed a single tear. He said He was a brute. He asked me to forgive him for any criticism He had made or seemed to make on my taste. That was a happy time. We fairly revelled in making up.

He insisted that I should continue to wear

the hat to show him that I had forgiven him for his brutality. I insisted that I couldn't wear the hat. I forgave him freely, but wear a hat he disliked so much, I simply could not.

Finally I hit upon a plan. We would go together the next day and change it. My confidence in my own taste was gone.

So we went together to carry back the hat. We had to take a cab, and I remember we had great difficulty in getting the hat box through the door, but by tipping it up sideways, we finally managed.

What a happy time we had. I was in my element.

He bought me four hats before he left the shop and each one was a dream. I felt very virtuous because I let him off so easy, for he would willingly have bought me four more, but it was like taking candy from a child. I really hadn't the heart. When we had ordered the hats sent home, I suggested

luncheon and we finished our happy morning in the happiest possible way.

Whether it was the length of time it took to select the hats, the amount they cost or the expense of the luncheon, I have never been able to say, but He is a changed man now. When he sees my hat now for the first time, his conduct reminds me of a story of four young fellows who went camping. They were to take turns in cooking. The first one chosen as cook, was to perform this office until some one complained, then the one who had complained was to take his place. One morning when the biscuits were unusually soggy, one of the chaps bit into one and exclaimed, "My God, what a biscuit!" but almost immediately remembering the penalty, he gasped:—"But I like it!"

So with Him, an expression of disappointment will flit across his face, but before the expression becomes fixed, he gathers himself together and says as the man did about the biscuit, "But I like it!"

From this it will be seen that the matter of hats no longer troubles me. I find a certain joy in having two or three undiscovered skeletons in my closet. Only once a year does the matter really come under discussion.

When we close our house in town and flit to our summer home, the joys of the process are many, but there comes a time just before we start when nerves become strained and dispositions grow corners, and these corners bump all the time. Fortunately this condition occurs only a few hours before our actual start.

We close the house, send the maids on ahead by train, and we go over the road in the automobile. A day or two before we start, he usually says pleadingly:—

"We won't carry anything down in the automobile."

I maintain a discreet silence until by and by he says, "Will we!" not as a question,

but as a declaration. I answer meekly,—"No dear. I was planning to carry a single hat, but of course I won't, if you aren't willing."

"We cannot carry one of those big hat boxes!"

"No, dear." I say this with meekness and sadness. Intuitively I know that if he feels that he is a little unreasonable he will relent. I go on the even tenor of my way, but I know he is uncomfortable. Presently he says,—"Why don't you send your hats down in a hat trunk?"

"I have," I answer.

"Then why in time do you want to take one down in the automobile?"

"Because it wouldn't go in the trunk."

"Now what on earth can you want so many hats on the island for?"

"Certainly not to wear!" I say sarcastically. "I might go in bathing with a hat on." There is no further discussion and I

endeavor with gentle charity to put the whole thing out of my mind, and the time draws on for our departure.

The last morning always seems a good deal of a lark to me, but as I begin to be merry with the spirit of vacation upon me, he naturally begins to feel the responsibility of getting us safely transported to our island. He always wonders if we will be in time to get the motor onto the boat; he wonders if we will have a blow-out; in fact he wonders about so many things that I cease to follow him after a while.

I have often thought how pleasant it would be if he would really enjoy that last morning. I like to walk through the darkened rooms and enjoy the beauty and tidiness of the scene. The coverings on the furniture, the absolute order, and the look of good housekeeping are all joy to my soul. I have often pictured what an ideal husband would do on this last morning. He would

draw me gently to a couch (When I pictured this I forgot that every couch was covered) and he would say admiringly, "What a wonderful woman you are!"

Here I would smile deprecatingly, and say, "Oh, I don't know—"

"Yes you are," he would insist, "you are a wonder! You always have a good plan and your executive ability is unusual."

This would lead to some merry jest and more pleasant conversation along the same line;—but such is not my happy lot. The ideal husband I have never seen. I make a casual remark on the last morning and He says, "Don't stop to talk. Are you almost ready?"

Finally all is done. He awaits my coming. He sits in majesty in the car with the boy beside him.

I appear with my hat boxes. One of these boxes I have previously secreted in the front hall in order to have it ready at the

proper moment, and the other I carry downstairs with me.

The automobile is already comfortably filled with wraps, which may be necessary on the journey, not to mention a few suitcases. I bring a few parasols and umbrellas to store away at the back of the seat. Then I sally boldly forth with my hat boxes. He says:—

"We cannot take them!"

I say, "I'll go down on the train and carry them." He looks sarcastically at the boxes, then He says, "You couldn't get into the train with those boxes."

"What shall I do?" I ask meekly.

"Can't you leave them at home?" he asks.

"They are summer hats." I answer. "Why did I buy them if not to wear in the summer?"

I will here omit a few of his remarks. The holy state of matrimony seems to me the happiest condition for any man on earth,

not to mention woman and I would hate to feel that any remarks of mine should prejudice a single soul against it, so I will here omit what he said and then what I said. The interesting thing to note is that presently we are flying over the road, the hat boxes packed in in some sort of fashion, and we more or less comfortable; after which result my effort during the long ride is to engage him in such pleasant conversation that he forgets all care, hat boxes, broken tires and all such.

This process had gone on for years. He always refused to carry the hats, he always relented and we made our journey in some discomfort.

There came at last a year when I grew too bold. When he sat in state as usual, I appeared with four hat boxes. It was too much. Even a worm will turn. I began to realize I had gone a step too far. He said no unkind word, but he looked at the hat

boxes and then he looked at the machine, and then he said calmly:—

"Did you think they would go in the car?"

I had just succeeded in tugging the biggest one through the door. He saw that my face was red with the exertion, then he said again:—

"Did you think you could get them in the car?"

I looked at the boxes, then I looked at the car, then I said savagely:—

"Well if I can't, something's the matter with the car!"

He then said kindly, "Let me pack them all in one box," He didn't know any better, so I just smiled in a superior way and told him it would be impossible.

"Can't you wear one?" he next suggested.

"One hat at a time is all I can manage," I return icily.

"Wouldn't that be a good thing to remember when you are buying hats?" he asked with some sarcasm.

I disdained to reply. Presently he said:—"What are you planning to do about it?"

"I don't know." I said miserably.

"Then if you have no plans to suggest, I will tell you what we'll do." He spoke with a kindness and authority that made me tremble for the fate of my hats. If he had only been cross the day would have been mine, but he wasn't.

"You may carry just one hat box in the car—not that fiendish one there," pointing to the largest, "but any of the other three."

"What are you going to do with the others?" I gasped.

"I am going to leave the other three boxes in the front hall."

"You are?"

"I am," and he did, and all summer long I had visions of my immaculate home with three great hat boxes in the front hall.

At that time I was in no mood to carry them upstairs, but later I wished I had. The fact that they were there where they didn't belong, worried me much more than the loss of the hats.

During the first part of the ride I was very dignified. He made some attempts at conversation, and I answered with polite sweetness but absolutely no zest. The morning was glorious, the car went beautifully, and we fairly flew over the ground and without intending to, I forgot my hats and all other unimportant things. As I grew pleased with the world again, I began to think how clever He was. I didn't know he could be so stern. By and by, I said:—

"Weren't you a little sorry I had to leave my hats?"

"Sure I was," He answered.

"You didn't look so."

"Didn't I? How did I look?"

"You looked fierce. I was almost afraid

of you." He laughed then as if I had said something funny.

"Let me see you look that way again."

He turns a beaming countenance toward me.

"No,—not like that."

"I don't know how I looked. Was I cross?"

"No only stern. You were kind yet firm?"

"I knew I had to be firm this morning. Usually when I see you surrounded with your hats, I feel so tender to you that I can't be firm, but when I saw those four hat boxes, I knew someone had to take a stand."

"Why do you feel tender to me when you see me with my hats?"

"You look so kind of touching that I can't bear to disappoint you."

That night when we sat on our little piazza, with the beauty of the island seeming a new and wonderful thing, I said to Him:—

"Do you like me as well as you would if I didn't have so many hats?"

"I like you, hats or no hats."

"But I am using hats figuratively; I am using that word to stand for a lot of things some people would call foolish. Do you suppose dear, you would enjoy me if I were to develop into a sensible women?"

"No," I continued solemnly, before he had time to answer, "you wouldn't like me at all if I were sensible."

"Then please don't be sensible because I want to like you."

"No, you wouldn't like me at all. You see if you had liked sensible girls, you would have picked out one of that kind."

"That's so, I never thought of that."

"And then dear, if I were sensible I should want you to be sensible."

"What!" He said aghast.

"You don't think you would please a really sensible woman do you?"

"Why, whats the matter with me?"

"You dress very frivolously. You please me, dear, but your waistcoats are pretty gay."

"On the whole, I like you best just as you are."

"I thought you'd say it if I kept on long enough."

"I'd have said it long ago if I'd known what you were driving at."

"And you wouldn't have me grow into a sensible woman for anything in the world?"

By this time he had his cue, and he answered loyally:—

"Not for worlds. I don't like 'em."

There was silence for a few minutes, then I said:—"Of course,—we're neither of us so wonderful,"—

"I wouldn't go as far as that."

"But we suit each other."

"Because we are both frivolous," he answers, anxious to please.

"No," I say, "because we are both sensible!"

Chapter VI.

IT was always a disappointment to me that I hadn't known the island in my youth. It was such an ideal place for love-making.

I do not mean to say, or even to suggest, that our love-making was over just because we were married. Our love had become one of the solid facts of the universe. It might have difficulties occasionally, but it had reached the stage where it could be relied on as a part of life itself. Now when love reaches this stage, the very surety of it makes it no more interesting to sit together with the moon shining on the water, than it does to sit by lamp-light in the cosiness of home. Our love could no longer be affected by moonlight, lamplight, or any outside influence.

So when we sat on our little piazza and the moon rose out of the water, making our lawn white and mysterious, I used to long to have the house filled with young people,—yes, with lovers.

One evening we sat there with the moon especially luminous, and I more than usually under its spell, when suddenly I said:—"Lets ask Betty down to see us!" Now one of the difficulties of being married is that the other one always knows what you are thinking. He said:—"What are you planning now?"

After I thought He had time to forget my first remark, I said:—"When does Phil come down?"

"They've taken the cottage for August," he answered.

Phil was a dear friend of ours, who with his sister, had taken a cottage down on the shore toward the village.

I will admit that I had thought a good

many times that these two dear friends of ours, who were also fond of each other, might well marry and be happy ever after.

He says that I not only thought it but said it,—that I was constantly saying it and saying it to them. This I do not admit. The truth was that Betty was the dearest girl in the world, pretty, charming, sometimes bewilderingly attractive, but a shade too intelligent. I, with my far-seeing eye, was afraid her intelligence would be her ruin. To be sure, I had always considered myself intelligent, but I was romantic also, romantic enough to counteract any over-serious effect of intelligence in my life. Betty was not romantic and I saw her life blasted unless I interfered. She was twenty-four years old too,—just the age when a woman begins to be critical of men, and she and Phil had been such good friends for the past two years, that I knew that nothing short of seeing him in an entirely new en-

vironment would ever enable her to consider him as a possible lover.

Now all this sounds as if I deliberately planned to bring these two young people together and let the moon do her worst. I truly didn't. It just popped into my head that August would be a convenient month for me to entertain Betty.

I didn't make any plan. I didn't have to. Was I to blame that I saw a vision? Thank goodness, I have the right to see visions! I saw Betty and Phil (in my vision), sitting on our piazza in the moonlight. Their faces looked white and misty. Betty's face had lost the little self-possessed, critical look it sometimes wore, and Phil was looking at her with a reverence and awe that I wished he might carry through life but knew of course he couldn't. That was what I saw. That picture came to me out of the moonlight. Am I to blame that it seemed to me like a prophecy?

And so in time the first of August came.

Shortly after Phil and his sister had taken possession of their cottage, Betty arrived on the island. She looked unusually pretty in her summer tan and I felt sure Phil would recognize this fact at once, but the real problem would be to enable her to see how attractive he was in his summer flannels. I broke the news to her that Phil was on the island. She said: "What a good looking chap he would be, if he had a little style!"

"Well, Betty," I said, "style isn't everything. I hope 'the boy' will grow up to be just as good a man as Phil, style or no style!"

"Oh yes," said Betty with a yawn, "I can imagine his mother might be very proud of him. I wasn't speaking as his mother, my dear, I was only wishing you'd happened to have an interesting man here."

I was quite accustomed to her mental attitude in this matter, so her remark did not depress me unduly. I have seen young

women change their minds many times in my day and I expect to see the same thing happen many times again.

Phil was coming to dinner. I went into Betty's room just before I went down stairs, and saw she was putting on a very becoming evening frock. Of course she could be relied on to look well. One never had to worry about that. Her intelligence hadn't gone to that extreme. A woman so intelligent that she had ceased to care how she looked would never be a life-long friend of mine. Betty looked lovely,—her hair was dusky, her cheeks like roses, and her frock a kind of golden glory. I knew any man would view her with seeing eyes.

Phil was a big chap, six feet tall with an ideal sort of face. He stooped a little and never seemed quite able to assert himself. He needed to stand straight, to frown and to take command of the situation generally. I loved him when he was angry. He was

at his best when some big emotion made his eyes blaze and brought his chest up.

Women are all alike and I knew positively that what would please me in him would please Betty. She should see him angry! Certainly the anger didn't come easily on this particular evening. The surprise and joy with which he greeted her were so genuine that he seemed more boyish than usual. He positively beamed.

Now I was old enough to enjoy his boyishness as well as his anger. I liked his beaming and the gleam of his white teeth, but I knew Betty wouldn't. An unmarried woman as young as she was, hasn't gained the maternal point of view. I couldn't look at any nice young man and not imagine "the boy" in his place, but I knew that if I were Betty, I should want him to stop smiling. I don't know how I knew, but I did, so it was up to me to stop the beam.

"Phil," I said, "Betty and I have been discussing smoking. She personally doesn't care to smoke cigarettes, but she maintains that if a woman cares to, she has quite the same right to do so that a man has."

The beam was successfully banished. Of course Betty and I hadn't at any recent day spent our time discussing cigarette smoking, but as we had at various times discussed every question under the sun, I knew we must have discussed that:— if we hadn't we ought to have.

Phil said:—"How can you say so! A good woman with high ideals, how can you think it right for any woman to acquire so disgusting a habit?"

"I have never thought it an ideal thing to do, but why should I condemn as wrong something that offends my taste only?" said Betty.

"It seems to me you are quite mistaken. Cigarette smoking has been proved to be

disastrous. Its effect on the moral nature is appalling."

Here Betty laughed lightly. "Why do you feel so sure, Phil, that every one has a moral nature? We are not all like you, you know."

This treating a solemn subject lightly was more than he could stand. He was almost rude. Betty was doing the beaming now.

He told her it was the sin of our age that we treated things, serious things, so lightly that we hardly recognized the difference between right and wrong. There was little he didn't say. The evening was his after this. I had no longer any worry. I knew he was at his best. Of course I should never receive any credit for placing him in the right stage setting. He would never dream that his evening's success was due to my humble management. Oh no, he would never remember that I had made any remark at all.

Without me I am sure he would still have been beaming and Betty would have been frowning and the whole evening would have been wasted: as it was, her eyes were bright when he said good-night, and she did not seem a bit bored when he asked her to go for a walk the next morning.

"Betty," I said, as I ran into her room before going to bed, "Don't let Phil bore you while you are here; if you don't want to walk all over the island, don't go."

"Oh you know I love to walk with anyone." said Betty as she took down her hair.

"Oh, I know dear, but it is plain to me that Phil bores you to death so I shouldn't bother with him," and I started to leave the room.

"Why, I wasn't bored at all tonight. I really enjoyed him very much. I like him when he is very much in earnest." At this point, she may have discerned a certain gleam in my eye, for she hastened to add,—

"You know, I've always liked Phil. Just because he is an impossible man to marry doesn't make him impossible as a friend."

"Why is Phil impossible to marry?" said I indignantly.

"I can't tell exactly. I only know if he were the last man in the world he would not be for me," and then she yawned as if she hoped I would go to bed and leave her to her own slumbers, so I gathered up my belongings and said good-night and left this as my parting shot:—"I am glad you feel like that dear, for now I can plan good times for you both without worrying for fear you will fall in love with Phil. *He* says you would be a serious handicap to Phil's career. We both feel that Phil is to do great things. Of course he mustn't marry at present. Good-night dear," and I shut the door softly and went out.

I could positively feel the air tingle with the surprise Betty felt at my remark and I

chuckled as I crossed the hall and went into my room.

He said, "What are you giggling about?"

I said, "Nothing dear; nothing you would understand, only sometimes it seems to me as if women were almost as funny as men!"

Chapter VII.

BEFORE many days passed, I realized that Phil was fathoms deep in love with Betty. I believe he always had been but hadn't quite known it. I saw the look of awe and reverence (the vision-look) in his eyes daily.

Now to people who haven't studied the human heart as deeply as I have, it may seem cruel that I did not send Betty home before she made Phil unhappy for life, but I knew an experience like this would do any young man good, even if she never fell in love with him.

I have never yet seen a heart-broken young man. I have seen some who thought they were, but in all the cases I have observed the disease passes and they are the better for the experience, so I was not at all

worried about Phil's symptoms. Of course everything Phil ever had, he had in its most violent form. His sister told me he even had the measles seriously, so it is not all to be wondered at, that now that he was in love, he was almost tragic in his earnestness.

As soon as he thought of Betty as a possible wife, he engaged her in all kinds of serious conversations. He sounded her on all subjects.

The pleasure I derived from these earnest conversations, I could hardly express in words. So many times I would know intuitively what was coming. After she had made an especially light and frivolous remark she would say to him:—

"What iniquity have I committed now, that you gaze at me so earnestly?" and he would answer, "Aren't you ever serious, Betty? Don't you ever look ahead through the years and make plans for the future?"

"Certainly not. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

"Really, Betty, don't you ever think seriously what you are going to do with your life,—don't you ever dream dreams?"

"Honestly, Phil, I don't believe I do. I live each day without thinking of the next one. I think I try to be good—well,—if not quite what you would call good, at least I try not to be wicked."

"Of course you are not wicked," Phil would assert indignantly. "How could any girl who looks as you do, have a wicked thought?"

"Oh I don't know about that. I've had a few quite wicked ones," and Betty would smile and show all her pretty white teeth. "I am afraid my goodness—what little I have—is the result of physical well being and consequent good-nature. I never go out of my way to be good."

"But Betty, don't you have ideals of goodness? Don't you long to make your life count,—to be worth while in the world?

I want to do the big thing with my life and not be contented with less than the best."

"I am sure you will, Phil," Betty would say. "You are a young man with a purpose; destined by all your friends to be great. When your wings have really grown, you won't forget the humble friends of your youth, will you?" Here Betty would smile wickedly. "I shall tell my grandchildren, whenever your name is mentioned, that I was your friend in pre-historic days. Please hurry up and be great. I never saw a friend of mine emerge from the chrysalis state. Perhaps friendship for me proves too great a handicap." Here she would glance meaningly in my direction.

"Don't make fun of me, Betty: you think so quickly I can hardly follow you, but I mean what I say. I want to do good with my life."

I knew he would say it once too many times. Betty looked at him with a teasing

inscrutable smile. "I never expect to be great, but I have one advantage over you."

"An advantage: what do you mean?"

"I am more honest than you are."

"Honest! What are you talking about? At least, Betty, I am honest."

"Of course Phil, no matter what I had mentioned as your particular fault, you would have disclaimed it. That is human nature, but just the same, I am more nearly honest than you are."

"I feel that I must insist on an explanation."

"Well Phil, you are an idealist, and an idealist is apt to idealize even himself and his own motives. You say you want to do the ideally good thing in life. The truly good thing is the unselfish thing, isn't it? Is that what you mean? I believe if you analyzed your own thoughts you would see that what you mean by the ideal thing is the thing that is known of men, that wins re-

nown, and that proves to you that you are abler then the other fellow. Am I not right?"

"But Betty, certainly it is right to excel, —to be ambitious!"

"Certainly. Excel all you want to and all your friends want you to, but don't mistake it for religion."

"Why isn't it religion?"

"To do the best you may for the very joy of doing it, is religion. I know of no better, but is it quite worth while to think so much of doing better than the other man?"

"I don't think I ever thought of it in quite that way. That's kind of discouraging, isn't it?"

"Why is it? Don't you love your work?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well, then, just do it in joy and never mind if some one else's work is better than yours. If it is, so much the better for you both. But do it without so much self-consciousness!"

"Self-consciousness! Surely you don't think I am self-conscious?"

"Of course you are. You are always digging yourself up by the roots to see if you are growing. You not only want to do good work in this world, but you want to stand back and see yourself do it. You make a picture of yourself in the very act. Now I know you wouldn't get half as much pleasure out of all this goodness, if you didn't feel the joy of being superior to the other fellow. You like to feel yourself 'an exception to the rule.' "

By this time I was reading intently. I would gladly have escaped, but I dared not attract attention. They had evidently forgotten my existence.

I knew that this was doing Phil no end of good, yet I was just as cross with Betty as I could be. Who was she that she should set him straight in the narrow way? A man is always so helpless in the hands of a wo-

man. A woman's mind may not be as many fathoms deep as a man's, but it is certainly more nimble.

Poor Phil looked so bewildered that I would gladly have shaken Betty.

Then the thought came to my mind that never before had she taken the trouble to set him straight on any subject. Did not this sudden interest show that things were progressing? I read my book very intently with my ears strained for Phil's reply to her last remark.

"I believe I do feel superior to some young men. I may as well be honest and say I do, but I am not quite the prig you evidently consider me. I want you to believe me when I tell you I am not. Please!"

"Of course you're not, Phil. You are all right, but you lack a sense of humor."

"Well if I am a self-conscious prig with no honesty and no humor I must be a deadly bore! I am sorry I have bored you so long,"

and Phil looked his sternest as he rose to go.

"Sit down: you are not to blame because you have no sense of humor; your self-consciousness will disappear as you grow older and I am sure you always mean to be honest, but you see the world through rose-colored glasses."

"I wish you did, too, Betty!"

"Why?"

"Oh your eyes are so, clear. Haven't you any illusions?"

I could see the color creep into Betty's cheeks.

"Oh, a few, only."

"I suppose you wouldn't be half so interesting if your sight were a little dim; if you were a little blind to peoples' faults, but just the same I wish you were."

"Would you like me better?"

"No, I wouldn't, but I would have a little more faith that sometime you might learn to like me. Do you ever see any man, Betty, without sizing him up, so to speak?"

"Honestly, I don't believe I do, but I seldom like one well enough to let him know I size Him up, as you call it."

"Then you really like me, do you?" I wish I could describe the look of longing that went with this question.

"Indeed I do,—well enough, you see, to tell you all your faults."

"Would you mind if I told you one of the few blemishes I think you have?"

"Certainly not." Betty's tone should have warned Phil, but what was he but a poor helpless man-creature knowing little of the intricacies of the feminine mind. If he could only have been contented to let her have the best of it,—if he could only have let her feel that she was giving him a new view-point, and let it rest there: but no, he actually thought she would be glad to have him tell her any little fault she might possess that she might correct it.

Poor Phil didn't know much. He would

learn from Betty, if his eyes were open at all, many things that would be useful to him in his next love affair, but now he was hopelessly ignorant.

"Well, Betty, I wish you weren't quite so practical."

"Isn't it nice to be practical?" asked Betty innocently.

"Perhaps practical isn't the right word, but I wish you didn't bring a fellow back to earth with such a bump," said Phil wistfully.

"You were born to stay in the clouds, Phil. I am contented to stay on the ground."

Phil looked troubled.

"I haven't said what I mean. I can't quite put it into words, but it seems as if you prided yourself on being able to see the flaw in everything."

"If the flaw is there why not see it?" asked Betty a little defiantly.

"Because a girl who looks like a damask rose ought not to be critical."

"But do I look like a damask rose? That seems to me the most important observation you have made this morning."

"You know very well you do, and a girl who looks as you do, should be tender; tender to peoples' faults and tenderer to people."

Betty laughed, but her cheeks were glowing.

"Oh Phil, you don't know how tender I can be when the occasion demands it."

"Can you?" Phil looked doubtfully at her.

"When the occasion demands it, only when the occasion demands it."

After that the conversation drifted into less personal channels, and I was left in my corner to philosophize to my heart's content.

Was there ever, I thought, a clearer illustration of the difference between a man and a woman. He had taken his medicine and tried to swallow it. He didn't like it but he took it like a man. He had listened imper-

sonally to Betty's criticism and tried to get her point of view.

He certainly would see things her way and take her suggestions if he could.

Did Betty take her medicine with the same docility? Not she. Figuratively speaking, she spewed it from her mouth, and yet I knew with my woman's wit, that every word of Phil's criticism of her had hit its mark and would bear fruit.

And I knew just as well, that Phil would go on his way unchanged and happy. He would even recall Betty's criticism of him, with a certain degree of pleasure, but it would take years to make her view-point clear to his maculine intelligence.

Why is it that it is comparatively easy for a woman to change her mind and almost impossible for a man to do so?

Is it because a woman has little to change, or is she abler on the instant to put herself in some one else's place and see another

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point of view? And what is the cause of this slight obtuseness in the masculine intellect? Is it perhaps because the male creature has had to fight the elements and has had to be impervious to all outward influences? Is it a certain stability he possesses; a certain strength that cannot be lightly moved?

Or is he like a naughty but lovable little boy who cannot change his mind, because he cannot see in any direction but the one in which he is going?

Surely, it is not for me to say.

Women are divided into two classes on this subject. One class believes the first statement to be true—and the other believes the last.

If you belong to the first, you grow naturally to be a clinging wife, who looks to her husband as to God.

If you belong to the last, your love for your husband will grow tender and mater-

nal. You may recognize that these masculine traits are not quite ideal, but you love them because they belong to your boy,—no matter how old he is,—your boy.

Which is the better way? I wonder.

Chapter VIII

And so the long lazy summer days passed by.

Just as I expected, Betty developed into a soft, tender creature, with never a critical word of anyone, and hardly a remark out of her mouth that was not loving.

She was prettier than ever—this new gentleness was very becoming—but not half as entertaining.

The only moments now when I really enjoyed her, were those in which she forgot her new role and became again her old discriminating self. There were days at a time, when as far as any real pleasure in her conversation was concerned, I might as well have been talking to a man,—far better, for there are other qualities in a man's mind that are interesting, and I wouldn't expect

a man to be discriminating, but a woman who lacks in this particular direction,—well, she is disappointing to say the least.

Who would have dreamed that Betty would develop into a kindly creature, with absolutely no point of view; with no opinion of her own on any subject, except the one you could predict she would have, before you asked her?

I knew many women of that type, but I had never before put Betty in that class.

Was this change to be permanent or was it a dramatic pose? Was it simply that she had fallen in love with Phil and knowing that he idealized "gentleness in women" was she dramatically letting herself go, so to speak, just to see how gentle she could be?

Up to this time, it had seemed wholly desirable to me that these two people should marry, but now I began to feel tragically responsible. Perhaps it was this heartbreaking result I had observed in Betty

that aroused my slumbering conscience. Whatever the cause, I began to wonder if perhaps I had been a little to blame. It seemed to me as I thought it over, that those disposed to be critical of my conduct, might think I had thrown these young people together. They might almost think I had taken rather an active part in the proceeding.

I knew of one individual who was never disposed to be critical of me, so I went to Him to talk the matter over. I followed Him upstairs as He went to change His shoes to go sailing. I said meekly: "Does it seem to you as if Betty and Phil were in love?"

"Does it!" he said as he took off one shoe, "Sure it does, Why Phil is a perfect ass!"

"She's in love with him, too, I am almost sure,"—I said tremulously.

"She is?"—and here He laughed without the slightest sympathy for me, or for Betty

or for anyone, but just as if he thought it was a tremendous joke.

"Why are you so silly? What are you laughing at?" I asked indignantly.

"Well," he said, "if you had to listen to Phil's drivel about her, as many hours a day as I have to, you would be glad you could laugh". Here I waited a minute while He got His shoe horn and put on His shoe.

"But it doesn't seem right for you to laugh when it is all so serious. Do you think there is anything funny about Phil?"

"Phil, funny!—I should say not!"

"Well then, why is it funny that Betty is in love with him?"

"Poor beggar," and here He laughed again,—"He told me this morning, he knew he wasn't worthy of her and he was sure she wouldn't marry him in a thousand years."

"Well, I'm not at all sure she will. I

don't think she will, but if she should—no, I mean if he should—no, I mean if *they* should fall in love and marry, you don't think, do you dear, that I am in any way responsible, or to blame?" and here I looked pleadingly at Him.

"To blame! Now see here, if you would put the same amount of interest and energy into any useful profession, that you do to the mixing up of people in the holy bonds of matrimony, you'd be famous."

This was very hard to bear.

"Don't you think they'll be happy?" I asked tearfully.

"Just as likely as not." Here he started for the door.

"Aren't you going to kiss me good-bye?"

"Sure I am," He said cheerfully, and He did. It was not a kiss that contained much sentiment, but I suppose you couldn't expect a man to know just how much it would mean, when you were a little discouraged, to

feel that you were somebody's ideal. That kiss was not at all the kind a man would have given to his ideal. It had the characteristic of a slap on the back; it was good-natured and kindly but in my present mood it was depressing.

I watched him go out to the boat; he did wave his hand to me, but rather absent-mindedly; and then I watched the boat sail out of the harbor. "Oh dear! What should I do?" My conscience was terribly active. Usually it lies pretty dormant, but now it was rampant. I had an actual ache in the pit of my stomach,—where I presumed my conscience was.

"Was it too late to try to influence Betty?" I wondered. I was willing to do anything, but I had a hopeless feeling that it would be useless.

I knew Betty was on the piazza, so I took a book and went downstairs. I approached her in my idlest mood.

"The boys have gone sailing, haven't they? Why didn't you go Betty?"

"They didn't ask me," she laughed.

"I am glad they didn't."

"You are? Why?"

"Because Phil follows you about all the time."

"Oh, not all the time; not quite all the time. Evidently, he didn't want me this afternoon," and she smiled.

"He probably begins to see how terribly bored you have become."

"I'm not terribly bored," and Betty threaded her needle and began to sew.

"But dear," I said, "I hate to have you bored at all. I hate to have your visit spoiled. You know I feel responsible for all this. I want your visit to be a pleasant one."

"It has been very pleasant, dear," said Betty as she sewed calmly on.

"It is your own fault if it's not. Why don't you snub Phil?"

"Snub Phil! Why should I?"

"Oh Betty, I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but you used to know how to snub people gently and not hurt them much, just enough to show them where they belong. Have you forgotten how?" I was sure she knew very well what I meant, but she looked as innocent as a sucking dove.

"I should certainly never want to snub Phil," she said with the color coming into her cheeks.

"No one would,"—I agreed heartily, "but I believe dear, that I have talked so much of Phil, have sung his praises so constantly and have so insisted that he was the noblest young man I knew, that you, out of courtesy to me, have felt obliged to treat him extremely well."

"Have I treated him well?" and Betty bit off a thread with her white teeth.

"Yes, too well. I wouldn't if I were you."

"Why not?"

"He might misunderstand it," I said solemnly.

"In what way?"

"He might think, dear, you were willing to marry him."

"I have made it a rule never to think a man wants to marry me until he asks me to."

"A mighty good rule, too," I hastened to assure her. "But perhaps Phil has asked you to marry him." Here I waited for a confession but none came, so I hastened to say, "Of course I don't want you to tell me if he has. No dear, I don't want to force your confidence. I just want to feel sure that my enthusiasm in regard to Phil hasn't influenced you in any way."

"I am sure it hasn't," said Betty quietly.

"I am going to say to you frankly, that I think it very undesirable for you two people to marry."

"I thought you always wanted everybody to marry," said Betty wickedly.

"Nearly everybody,—but not you and Phil."

"Are we both too wicked?"

"Of course you're neither of you wicked."

"Oh, we are both too good. That's better."

"Indeed you are not too good. It takes all the goodness any two people have to make marriage a success."

"Then Phil is too good,—and I am too wicked. I see."

"My dear, it is not a question of goodness or of wickedness. I am much older than you are." This was not a subject I usually bragged much about, but I felt that it sounded well here, and would produce an effect. It certainly did. Betty stopped sewing and looked at me.

"I can, perhaps, see farther than you can." This I said very solemnly.

"I see," I continued, "that probably no two people were ever so little suited to each other as you and Phil."

Here Betty dropped her earnest expression and began to laugh Her laugh was rather irritating to me because it was so full of amusement. I couldn't imagine why she was amused.

"Did you imagine I thought Phil and I would make an ideal couple?" she said.

"No, I didn't," I snapped, "but I thought you might imagine from my conversation heretofore, that I thought you two would make an ideal couple."

"Oh no. Don't you remember you told me the first night I arrived, that I would be a handicap to Phil's career?" And Betty smiled her sweetest smile.

"You know I didn't mean that."

"How did I? You said it. Who was I to dispute your word?"

"Well, I didn't mean that,—then."

"Have I grown wickeder since then?"

"If you will keep still long enough, Betty, I will tell you what I mean."

"I'll be good, dear; fire away."

"The truth is," (I spoke solemnly) "no two people could be farther apart than you and Phil."

"We are far apart now, because he is out sailing," said Betty frivolously.

"Betty, how can you!"

"I thought perhaps you didn't know that he is coming in pretty soon and we are going to walk, so you see we shall then be nearer together."

"Of course, if you are going to misunderstand me,"—I said with great dignity.

"No, I'm sorry. Please go on. I'll listen to every word. Phil and I were far apart when you left off."

"You will always be. Take my word for it, Betty."

"Of course you must remember that I

same things he enjoys, and when he found you didn't, he would be miserable."

"That would be too sad," said Betty meekly.

"Sad!" "You have no idea how sad." By this time I was having just as good a time picturing how miserable they were sure to be, as I had had in planning them a happy future. I was full of my subject. I should have kept on indefinitely had not some callers interrupted my flow of eloquence. When they were gone, the boys came back from sailing, and there was no opportunity to say more.

But I made up my mind I would finish the good work. I would be sure I had done my best to keep these two dear people from blasting their lives. So I sent a telegram to Walter inviting him down for a few days.

I suppose every family has its Walter. I don't think we could have kept house without our Walter. If we had a young girl to

entertain, we turned her over to Walter;—if we wanted an extra man to play cards or to dance we sent for Walter. We were both very fond of him. He was the only man whom I had known in my youth who ever visited us after we were married.

It is a strange thing, that the men you know when you are young, never care to visit you when you grow older. Walter did. He was our right hand man on all occasions. He was really as old as I was, but he looked a youth. He was fond of sailing, swimming and all kinds of sports. He was, moreover, the best dancer in the world. He was a confirmed bachelor. We knew he wouldn't marry, so we never tried to arrange matches for him, but whenever a crisis occurred in our affairs, as at the present time, we always looked at one another and said: "Let's ask Walter down."

In this case, I had done it on my own responsibility. This was Friday evening

and I felt sure he could come down Saturday afternoon and stay over Sunday.

We always danced in the old-fashioned house on Saturday night, and I was sure that Betty, who was extremely fond of dancing, would enjoy for once having a good partner. If she did enjoy Walter's dancing, it might open her eyes to the fact, that as Phil didn't dance she would have to give up dancing and perhaps this would make her consider that there were other things she would have to give up. On the other hand, it might open Phil's eyes to the fact that Betty was fond of many things that were distinctly frivolous.

I felt very proud of having, without ostentation, given both of them an opportunity to see each other in a new light, and I prayed they would profit by my consideration.

Walter came in time for dinner on Saturday night. When Betty came downstairs in a wonderful white gown, with a big red

rose on, I saw that Walter was glad he had come.

He had the happiest possible manners. He was never afraid a girl was going to marry him, as so many bachelors are. His attitude was always hopeful, as if he expected sometime to find a girl who would marry him. This always pleased every girl he met. He knew how to give the impression to each one, that if he had met *her* in his youth, his life would not now be the arid desert it was. I knew, however, that Betty would thoroughly understand him, but she would also enjoy him. I had no worry about either of them. Betty would understand the hardness of his heart and enjoy the gentle charm of his manners.

Dinner was over on Saturday night, and Walter and Betty had gone out on the piazza to wait a few moments before going over to dance. I was left alone with Him.

"Well, dear," I said with great dignity,

"however much I was to blame in the beginning in regard to Betty and Phil, I have done my best to correct it."

"Is Walter chosen as the corrective?" he asked quizzically.

"Not at all. I knew you would be glad to see Walter."

"I had an earnest talk with Betty yesterday afternoon," I continued.

"Poor Betty! What did you say to her?"

"I told her frankly that she and Phil were absolutely unsuited to each other."

"Where does Walter come in?"

"Well, seeing Walter will reveal to Betty that she is very fond of all the gaiety that Walter stands for and Phil doesn't care for. In fact my conscience is clear, and I feel free of all responsibility."

He began to chuckle.

"What is the matter?" I asked with dignity. His chuckle grew into a laugh.

"You certainly have done it this time."

"Done what?" I asked in surprise.

He continued to laugh.

"Human intelligence could hardly do more."

I began to be vexed. "What do you mean?"

"If you haven't made a match this time it isn't your fault."

"I haven't been making a match, dear. I told Betty—" but here he interrupted.

"Yes,—first you throw these young people together in the best possible environment for love-making,"—

"But, dear," I gasped.

"Then," he continued, "just as the situation begins to lack novelty, you forbid the bans, and now you put the finishing touch on the whole affair, by supplying the extra man to bring the matter to a climax."

"Climax!—what do you mean?"

"Look for an engagement at once!"

"Nonsense!" I said.

"Wait and see."

I scorned and flouted his prophecy but I began to be worried. I remembered the evenings were moonlit now, and I knew their dangers. Sure enough the climax was not long delayed.

The first evening after Walter had gone home, Betty and I sat on the piazza with the moonlight shining over the water. I said to Betty—

"Isn't Walter a good dancer?"

"Yes," said Betty dreamily, as if her mind were not on the subject.

"Too bad Phil doesn't dance," I said. Here she smiled tenderly.

"Phil is a queer fellow," I ventured.

Betty turned her dreamy eyes toward me, then she looked off across the water, and then she said sententiously,—

"No one will ever know Phil but the woman he marries."

"Betty!" I gasped in horror, "You don't mean—"

"Yes I do, dear, and when I am Phil's wife, I shall know a very different Phil from the one the rest of the world knows. My Phil is a great man."

Think of the ingratitude of that remark! Think of it's conceit! *I* didn't know Phil! *I* didn't appreciate him! *I*, who had poked him under her nose from the very beginning! Would she have had the sense to see his good qualities, if I hadn't insisted that she should? And now that he was her property, no one could understand him but herself! It was too much!

Of course I kissed her and told her I hoped she would be happy. Phil came along just then and I kissed him. That rather restored my feelings, but I still felt abused. They strolled away in the moonlight, and their faces looked white and misty, just as they had looked when I had seen them in my vision. Phil's expression was adoring enough to satisfy even me. I watched them

walk down the little path and then along by the shore, until they disappeared from view.

I sat alone watching the moonbeams through my tears. The whole world seemed white and mysterious. He came out and sat down beside me.

"Dear," I said as I tucked my hand in his, "hereafter I am going to devote my whole time to being a good wife and mother.'

"Why, what's the matter? You aren't sick, are you dear?"

"No, of course I'm not sick,—but I want to be good."

"Who says you aren't good?" and the anger in his voice was joy to my soul.

"Nobody says I'm not, but nobody really appreciates me but you and the boy."

"Nobody knows you so well." Now wasn't that nice of him to say.

"You were right, dear. They are engaged."

"Yes, Phil just told me. I hope they are grateful to you."

"No the world is ungrateful, but you are not."

He kissed me then and while it wasn't quite the kiss a man gives his ideal, it seemed to me it was as near perfect as even an ideal would get if she'd been lived with ten years.

And we sat and held hands in the moonlight till it grew very, very late, and the lights across the harbor went out.

"Oh, don't you love The Island?" I said, sleepily.

"I sure do," he answered.

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